

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814



June 6, 2019

Alex Gutierrez  
Regulatory Affairs  
Southern California Edison  
8631 Rush St, General Office 4 – 235E (2nd Floor)  
Rosemead, CA, 91770

RE: West of Devers Upgrade Project: Minor Project Refinement #28

Dear Mr. Gutierrez,

On May 31, 2019, Southern California Edison (SCE) submitted a request for Minor Project Refinement (MPR) #28 for the following extra work areas to support construction activities approved under the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Notice to Proceed (NTP) #4, September 5, 2017, for the West of Devers Upgrade Project in the Counties of San Bernardino and Riverside, California:

- The expansion of Supersite 1X15-1X18 in three locations in the City of Loma Linda (Segment 1);
- A temporary helicopter landing zone (HLZ) in the City of Loma Linda (Segment 2);
- Temporary work areas for stringing activities in the City of Grand Terrace (Segment 2);
- Use of two existing access roads in the community of Whitewater (Segment 6); and
- An HLZ and staging area in the City of Redlands (Segment 1).

The CPUC voted on August 18, 2016 to approve SCE's West of Devers Upgrade Project (Decision D.16-08-017) and a Notice of Determination was submitted to the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 2014051041).

The CPUC also adopted a Mitigation, Monitoring, Compliance and Reporting Plan (MMCRP) to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures imposed on the West of Devers Upgrade Project during implementation. The MMCRP also acknowledges that temporary changes to the project, such as final project design and engineering or need for addition workspace, are anticipated and common practice for construction efforts of this scale and that an MPR request would be required for these activities. This letter documents the CPUC's thorough evaluation of all activities covered in this MPR, and that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested MPR activities.

MPRs are reviewed for consistency with CEQA requirements and are located within the geographic boundary of the project study area. MPRs do not create new or substantially more severe significant impacts, or conflict with any mitigation measure or applicable law or policy. Also, they do not trigger other permit requirements unless the appropriate agency has approved the change, and clearly and strictly comply with the intent of the mitigation measure or applicable law or policy.

MPR #28 for the work described below to support activities (approved under NTP #4) is granted by CPUC based on the factors described below.

**SCE MPR Request.** Excerpts from the SCE MPR request, received May 31, 2019 are presented below (indented):

Expansion of 1X15-1X18 Supersite for Wire Removal/Setup (Segment 1)

Supersite 1X15-1X18 will be expanded to the west in three areas within the SCE transmission line corridor, to provide adequate workspace coverage below the existing transmission lines for activities associated with wire wreck-out. No tree removal is required in the new work areas. The new work areas will be used for temporary material and equipment staging and wire wreck-out set-up activities.

The new work areas consist of approximately 2.89 acres of privately-owned agricultural land located within the SCE transmission line right-of-way in the City of Loma Linda. The work activities and schedule have been previously coordinated with the landowner in accordance with SCE's existing easement rights and agreements, as well as MM AG-3a.

Helicopter Landing Zone (Segment 2)

A 0.09-acre temporary helicopter landing zone (HLZ) will be located on the east side of Canyon Road, south of Hulda Crooks Park, in the City of Loma Linda (APN 0293-052-17). The HLZ will be used for helicopter-assisted wire wreck-out and wire set-up activities conducted in Segments 1 and 2. The HLZ may be grubbed prior to use.

The total temporary disturbance area associated with the HLZ consists of approximately 0.09 acre of developed/disturbed land, owned by the City of Loma Linda.

2X26 Wire Stringing Sites (Segment 2)

Two new temporary work areas are required east and west of Supersite 2X26 to facilitate wire stringing activities associated with 2X26. The new work areas may be mowed and receive drive and crush impacts only.

The total temporary disturbance area associated with the work areas consists of approximately 1.29 acres of developed/disturbed land and 0.31 acre of grassland/forbland. The land is privately owned by AMG-RECHE LLC, but is located within the existing SCE transmission line right-of-way in the City of Grand Terrace.

Access Road between T232 and 6S38 (Segment 6)

The use of an existing access road between Joshua Road and Cholla Road in the community of Whitewater is required to connect Supersites T232 and 6S38 to enable construction personnel, material, and equipment to travel directly from one site to the other while minimizing travel within the residential neighborhood during transmission line construction. No improvements to the existing road are required for construction use; however, the road will be maintained during construction use in accordance with the Project SWPPP and City requirements.

The public access road is previously developed/disturbed and owned and maintained by the community of Whitewater.

Access Road between 6N34-6S34 (Segment 6)

The use of an existing access road between Supersites 6N34 and 6S34 is required to enable construction personnel, material, and equipment to travel directly between the north and south transmission line alignments to minimize travel along approved access roads in the Coachella Valley during transmission line construction. No improvements to the existing road are required for construction use; however, the road will be maintained during construction use in accordance with the Project SWPPP and City requirements.

The access road is previously developed/disturbed land located in the community of Whitewater.

#### Helicopter Landing Zone (HLZ) (Segment 1)

The temporary work area approved in TEWS #14 will be used to facilitate helicopter assisted activities associated with Segment 1 wire stringing and wreck-out throughout the project duration. The area will be used as an HLZ and a staging area for construction vehicles, materials, and equipment.

The temporary work space consists of approximately 1.96 acres of developed SCE-owned and operated storage space located immediately adjacent to the north side of the San Bernardino Substation (APNs 0292-491-01, 0167-551-06) located in the City of Redlands.

### **CPUC Evaluation of MPR Request**

In accordance with the MMCRP, the subject MPR request was reviewed by CPUC to confirm that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested MPR activities and that the subject request was within the geographic boundary of the Project study area. Additionally, the CPUC Environmental Monitor (EM) conducted a site visit of the requested work areas on June 4, 2019. The following discussion summarizes this analysis for agriculture, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use, noise, paleontological resources, traffic and transportation, visual resources, water resources, and wildland fire. A list of bulleted conditions is presented to define additional information and clarifications regarding mitigation requirements. In some cases, these items exceed the requirements of the Mitigation Measures (MMs) and Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) and are based on specific site conditions and/or are proposed conditions by SCE.

**Agriculture:** No Important Farmland will be permanently impacted with the implementation of this MPR. The additional work areas and disturbance associated with this MPR are all temporary.

**Air Quality:** During proposed construction, SCE shall implement the Fugitive Dust Control Plan approved by the CPUC on May 22, 2017, as well as the Exhaust Emissions Control Plan approved by CPUC on June 8, 2017. In addition, in compliance with MM AQ-1b, off-road equipment with engines larger than 50 horsepower shall have engines that meet or exceed U.S. EPA/CARB Tier 3 Emissions Standards. No additional impacts to air quality will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Biological Resources:** SCE submitted biological resource survey information with the MPR request. SCE conducted a desktop analysis of publicly available data and relevant project data to determine the potential for special-status species to occur at the new work areas. The new work areas were included in the study area for previous habitat assessments and focused surveys, as well as recent preconstruction surveys.

Suitable substrates for nesting birds protected by the California Fish and Game Code and federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, including trees, shrubs, and the ground surface, are located adjacent to the work areas and in the project vicinity. Preconstruction surveys for nesting birds, and ongoing surveys and monitoring for nesting birds, will take place during the nesting season (January 1 – August 31). If active nests are found, avoidance buffers will be established, and potential impacts will be mitigated through implementation of the Nesting Bird Management Plan.

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) habitat is widespread in the Project area. Although burrowing owls are not anticipated to occur within the work areas, if active burrows are identified during preconstruction surveys and/or monitoring within 300 feet of construction activities, potential impacts will be addressed according to the Burrowing Owl Management and Passive Relocation Plan.

Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliioptila californica*): The access road to Supersite 2X26 traverses USFWS-designated Critical Habitat Unit 10 for coastal California gnatcatcher (CAGN); however, no suitable habitat occurs along the road. Since the road is existing, no impact to primary constituent elements of critical habitat will occur. In addition, the 2X26 wire sites are located within USFWS-designated critical habitat for CAGN; however, the habitat is comprised of grassland/forbland and developed/disturbed land which is not breeding habitat for the species and wire sites will feature drive and crush impacts only. Temporary impacts are subject to restoration upon completion of construction. Further, focused surveys for CAGN were conducted in March and April 2018, and several rounds of protocol surveys were conducted in the years preceding construction. No CAGN birds or nests were observed within the survey area during these preconstruction surveys. Due to a history of negative CAGN survey results in the area, San Bernardino County is considered unoccupied by CAGN at this time and no impacts to CAGN are anticipated. Preconstruction surveys, including surveys for nesting birds, will be conducted in all new work areas during the avian breeding season (Jan 1 – Aug 31).

Special-status small mammals such as the pallid San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*), northwestern San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax fallax*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), desert kit fox (*Vulpus macrotis*), San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*), and/or San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) can occur in many parts of the project area. Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*) and Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus chlorus*) are not expected. A historic San Diego desert woodrat occurrence is located within Supersite 2X26, San Diego pocket mouse occurrences are located adjacent to the Segment 2 HLZ and within 550 feet of 6S38, and 16 active desert woodrat middens were observed with Supersites 6S33, T239, and 6S34 or within 10 feet of the Segment 6 access roads. Suitable and occupied habitats for Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris*) and Palm springs pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris bangsi*) (collectively “little pocket mice”) occur throughout Segment 6. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to little pocket mice to the extent feasible. If any of these special-status species are found, potential impacts will be addressed according to the Small Mammals Avoidance and Minimization Plan. In addition, A 10-foot no-entry buffer was established around each woodrat midden using ESA signs. The avoidance buffers do not intersect with any of the new work areas or access roads in Segment 6. If construction determined avoidance of a buffer in not possible, a qualified biologist will relocate the midden in accordance with the Small Mammal Avoidance and Minimization Plan. No impacts to special-status small mammals are anticipated.

Stephen’s kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*), listed as threatened by the State and endangered by the feds: The Segment 2 HLZ is located within mapped Stephens’ kangaroo rat (SKR) suitable habitat to the east. No SKR were captured during previous surveys, including the trapping survey conducted in the area in 2018. Based on a lack of historic data, habitat conditions, and negative results over several years of surveys, SKR are not expected. However, the activities will be limited to existing disturbed areas to the extent possible.

Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), listed as threatened by both State and feds: The access road between Supersites 6N34 and 6S34 is located within desert tortoise modeled habitat. No definitive signs of desert tortoise were observed during the 2011 and 2012 protocol desert tortoise surveys in the area or during the active preconstruction survey. The existing north/south access road would shorten the drive taken by construction vehicles in mapped modeled desert tortoise habitat by providing more direct access between the north and south transmission line alignments. With clearance surveys and monitoring, no impacts to desert tortoise are anticipated.

Special-Status Terrestrial Herpetofauna: A red-diamond rattlesnake (*Crotalus ruber*) was observed within 670 feet of the new access road at 6S38. No other special-status terrestrial herpetofauna were observed within the other new work areas; however, many species have the potential to occur throughout the project area. Therefore, a preconstruction survey for each work area will be conducted prior to use. With implementation

of the mitigation measures and biological monitoring during construction, no impacts to special-status terrestrial herpetofauna are anticipated.

**Special-Status Plants:** The access road between 6N34 and 6S34 is located within Coachella Valley milk-vetch modeled habitat. Previous comprehensive surveys have been negative. No special-status plants were observed within the other new work areas. If special-status plants are identified during future surveys or clearance sweeps/monitoring, ESA buffers will be established, and special-status plants will be avoided to the extent feasible. Unavoidable impacts to special-status plants will be addressed in accordance with the Special-status Plant Salvage and Relocation Plan. A preconstruction survey for each work area will be conducted prior to use.

**Regulated Trees:** No tree trimming, or tree removal is proposed for construction activities within the work areas; however, if required, the project shall obtain the necessary permits.

**Jurisdictional Waters:** Wetland and non-wetland jurisdictional features are located throughout the project area. No jurisdictional features intersect the new work areas. BMPs will be implemented in accordance with the Project SWPPP. A preconstruction survey of the work areas will be conducted prior to use; therefore, no impacts to jurisdictional waters are anticipated.

**Cultural Resources:** SCE submitted cultural resource information with the MPR request. A Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP) has been completed for the West of Devers Upgrade Project and was approved by the CPUC in October 2017.

The new work areas are located within the West of Devers Area of Potential Effects (APE) and were covered within the record search data that was conducted during previous WOD cultural surveys and studies; *West of Devers: Cultural Resources Assessment and Class III Inventory* (LSA, 2013); *Area of Potential Effects for the Engineering Refinements Survey and Recommendation of Eligibility for Cultural Resources with SCE Company's West of Devers Project* (ASM, 2015); and *Cultural Resources Management Plan for Southern California Edison Company's West of Devers Transmission Line Upgrade Project, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California* (Williams, Audry; 2016). The record search and survey results for the new work areas were negative for cultural resources. In the event of unanticipated discoveries, MM CL-1b, MM CL-1c, MM CL-1d and the Cultural Resources Management Plan requirements would be implemented. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated with the implementation of this MPR.

**Geology and Soils:** SCE conducted geotechnical studies to evaluate faults, landslides and unstable slopes, and soil characteristics as outlined in MMs G-1a, G-2a, and G-5a. The geotechnical survey reports were reviewed and approved by the CPUC on August 17, 2017. No additional impacts to geology and soils will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** As required by MM HH-1a, SCE prepared and submitted a Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Plan to the CPUC on September 27, 2017. Hazardous materials used and stored on site for the duration of construction activities will be managed according to the Plan. A Soil Management Plan has been developed consistent with MMs HH-2a and HH-3a to provide guidance for the proper handling, onsite management, and disposal of impacted soil that might be encountered during construction activities, including soil samples to be collected in construction areas where the land has historically or is currently being used for agriculture and would be subject to ground disturbance by the project. SCE's Soil Management Plan was combined with the Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Plan described above. Also, SCE's contractor submitted information including written procedures for fueling and maintenance of construction equipment and an Emergency Response Plan. No additional impacts from hazards or hazardous materials will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Land Use:** As required by MM LU-1a, a Construction Notification Plan was prepared by SCE and approved by CPUC on May 22, 2017. The Plan identified the procedures to ensure that SCE will inform property and business owners of the location and duration of construction. The Plan includes provisions for public noticing including mailers, newspaper advertisements, public venue notices, and includes the establishment of a public liaison and toll-free information hotline. No additional impacts to land use will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Noise:** Best Management Practices for construction noise management will be implemented as outlined in MM N-1a to reduce construction noise exposure at noise-sensitive receptors and to avoid possible violations of local rules, standards, and ordinances during construction. Construction noise shall be confined to daytime, weekday hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) or an alternative schedule developed by SCE based on its coordination with the local jurisdiction(s). Construction traffic and helicopter flights shall be routed away from residences and schools, where feasible. No additional impacts to noise will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Paleontological Resources:** A Paleontological Resource Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (PRMMP) has been completed for the West of Devers Upgrade Project and was approved by the CPUC on May 9, 2017. No ground disturbance activities requiring paleontological monitoring will occur in the Segment 1 HLZ, Segment 1 wire wreck-out areas, or along the existing Segment 6 access roads. The Segment 2 HLZ and 2X26 wire stringing sites are located in an area determined to have low PFYC 2 paleontological sensitivity; therefore, the sites may initially be spot checked if grading is required to confirm the PFYC 2 classification. In the event of unanticipated discoveries, MM PAL-1d and the PRMMP requirements would be implemented. No additional impacts to paleontological resources will occur with implementation of this MPR.

**Traffic and Transportation:** Consistent with MM T-1a and MM T-1b, Construction Transportation and Traffic Control Plans have been developed and approved. The Construction Transportation Plan describes timing of commutes, methods of reducing crew-related traffic, and other methods for reducing construction-generated additional traffic on regional and local roadways. No additional impacts to traffic and transportation will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Visual Resources:** The use of additional work areas described in this MPR is no different than what was described in NTP #4 and is temporary. No additional impacts to visual resources will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Water Resources:** As required by MM WR-2a, SCE developed and submitted an Erosion Control Plan to the CPUC and BLM. The Erosion Control Plan was incorporated into the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which will be kept onsite and readily available on request. SCE submitted the SWPPP to the CPUC on May 25, 2017. Any changes necessitated by this MPR will be incorporated into the SWPPP document. No additional impacts to water resources will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**Wildland Fire:** SCE submitted a Fire Management Plan on February 10, 2017 to satisfy the conditions of MM WF-1a and the Plan was approved by the CPUC on July 18, 2017. A revised Fire Management Plan was submitted by SCE on October 29, 2018, which was approved by the CPUC on October 30, 2018. The revised Plan was also approved by BLM and State and local fire agencies. The work areas in this MPR are located along developed/disturbed areas. No additional impacts to wildland fire will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

**The conditions noted below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:**

- SCE shall provide the CPUC with Collector data for the new work areas covered in this MPR prior to use of the subject area.
- All applicable Project MMs, APMs, compliance plans, and permit conditions shall be implemented. Some measures have on-going/time-sensitive requirements and shall be implemented prior to and during construction where applicable.
- If any tree trimming or removal is required, the appropriate permits shall be submitted to CPUC prior to commencement of such activities.
- Required notifications in accordance with the Construction Notification Plan shall be made for the MPR helicopter landing zones.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, and this MPR shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities. All permits and plans shall be made available to the CPUC EM upon request.
- All crew members shall be WEAP trained prior to working on the Project. A log shall be maintained on-site with the names of all crew personnel trained. The WEAP training brochure can be provided in Spanish or other languages if appropriate. All participants will receive a hard-hat sticker for ease of compliance verification.
- No movement or staging of construction vehicles or equipment shall be allowed outside of the approved areas. If additional temporary workspace areas or access routes, or changes in technique and mitigation implementation to a lesser level are required, an MPR request shall be submitted for CPUC review.

Sincerely,



John E. Forsythe, AICP  
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen